



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Water is the most precious of the Earth's resources and an essential part of daily life.

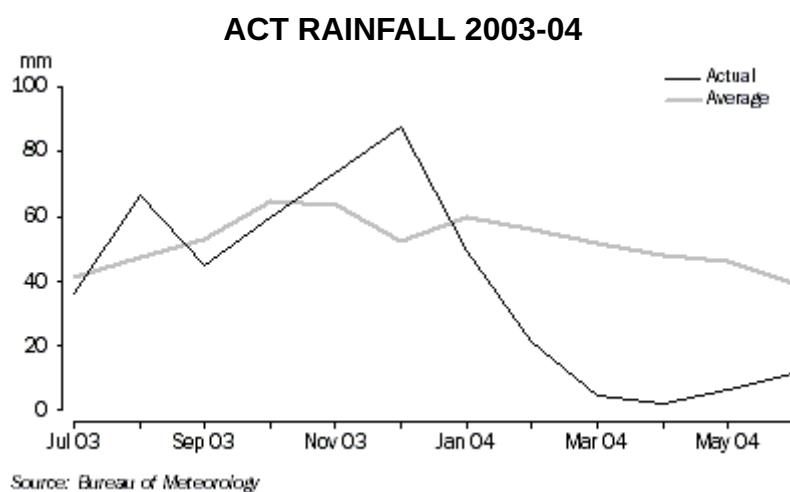
In 2003-04, the average person in the ACT used approximately 426 litres of water per day. People in developing countries such as Africa, use as little as five litres per person per day.

The following information was sourced and collected from the ABS, ActewAGL and the Bureau of Meteorology. This data has previously been released and this article provides further analysis of the data.

WATER SUPPLY - RAINFALL, EVAPORATION AND DROUGHT

Rainfall in the ACT in 2003-04 was 463 mm. This was a 36% increase from 2002-03 (340 mm), but less than the long term average rainfall of 625 mm.

In the year from July 2003 to June 2004, three months had above average rainfall. These were all in the latter half of 2003 (August, November and December). In April 2004, the ACT recorded 2.4 mm of rainfall, which is five percent of the April long term average (47.8 mm).



Evaporation from July 2003 to June 2004 was 1777.6 mm, which was 83.8 mm (5%) above the long term average of 1693.8 mm.

The continuing drought in the ACT has brought a decline in ground cover and reduced flows in ACT rivers, as well as a general decline in water quality.

The drought, which is the worst on record, necessitated the ACT Government introducing water restrictions in December 2002 when dam levels fell to 43% of capacity. Since then, water restrictions have remained in place in the ACT. Currently, stage three restrictions are expected to remain in place at least until the end of March 2005.

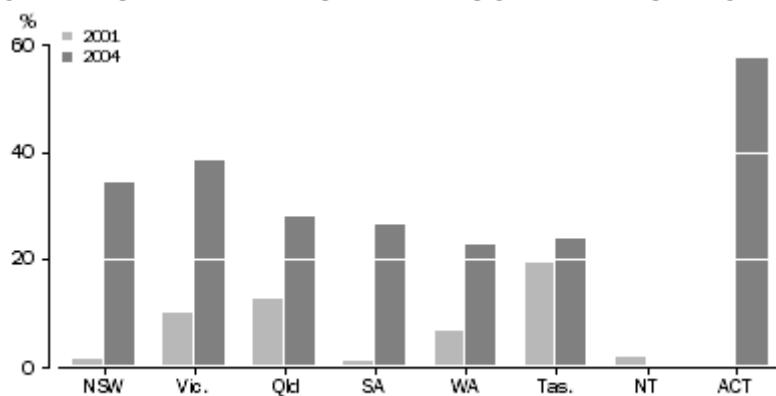
WATER SUPPLY - QUALITY AND PROVISION TO HOUSEHOLDS

The quality of water is dependent on the health of catchment areas. Canberra's water catchment areas suffered significant damage during the bushfires of January 2003, with vegetation almost completely burnt out. Almost all of the Cotter, Gudgenby-Nass and Paddy's river catchments and parts of the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee River catchments were bushfire affected. In February 2003, one rainstorm washed the equivalent of 17 years of soil and 27 years of ash and charcoal from fire damaged catchment into Canberra's water supply dams, making them unusable for drinking water. As a consequence Canberra's water was sourced solely from Googong Dam south of Queanbeyan, which had been unaffected by the fires. Canberra's water was wholly supplied by Googong Dam for three months in 2003-04.

At March 2004, mains water was fully established in the ACT (100%) compared with the national average of 93%. In 2004, 58% of ACT households nominated supply restrictions as a problem with their mains water supply. This was the highest rate nationally and compared with 38% of Victorian households and 34% of New South Wales households. The national average was 32%.

Since 2001, there was an increase in households that nominated supply restrictions as a problem with their mains water supply. In 2001, 0.4% of ACT households nominated supply restrictions as a problem, this was the lowest of all states and territories. The second lowest state was South Australia (1.2%) followed by NSW (1.5%). The increase reflects the length and type of water restrictions which have been placed on water use since that time.

PROBLEMS WITH MAINS WATER SUPPLY RESTRICTIONS



Source: Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices, March 2004 (cat. no. 4602.0).

WATER USAGE

From 2002-03 to 2003-04 total water use in the ACT declined by 13,305 megalitres (ML) (from 65,567 ML to 52,262 ML) despite an increase in customers. Annual water consumption per capita for 2003-04 was 156 kL, a decrease of 24% from 2002-03 (206 kL). Maximum daily demand in 2003-04 was 323 ML, a decrease of 12% from 2002-03 (367 ML).

WATER STATISTICS ACT

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04 %Change 2002-03 to 2003-04
Customers	124,570	126,750	129,114	131,893 2.2%
Length of mains (km)	2,933	2,948	2,964	2,985 0.7%
Maximum daily demand (ML)	392.0	415.7	366.7	323.0 -11.9%

Total consumption (ML)	62,834	65,904	65,567	52,262	-20.3%
Consumption per person per annum (kL)	185.6	193.7	206.2	156.0	-24.3%
Rainfall (mm)	618.2	633.2	340.2	463.0	36.1%

Source: ActewAGL Annual Report 2003-04

To find out more about the ACT and ACT statistics see the [ACT Theme Page](#).

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